



QUARTERLY REPORT
(April-June 2002)
THE PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
USAID's Conflict Mitigation Initiative in the Ferghana Valley
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1: Executive Summary

The Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) works in all three countries that comprise the Ferghana Valley, and aims to reduce inter-ethnic and trans-border conflict through a combination of social and infrastructure projects designed by local community groups. Through such projects, the network of NGOs that work with Mercy Corps in PCI hopes to improve the quality of life in rural communities, by helping people solve their own problems, and share solutions across national, ethnic, gender and age gaps.

The full team of field officers and support staff that make up PCI have recently completed their second quarter of work. The field staff have received training in facilitation and participatory planning through our Tajikistan partners, ICA:EHIO. This type of methodology is central to our community mobilization approach because it ensures that all members of communities have the chance to contribute to a decision that is not driven by external perceptions of need. One member of each of the five field teams has also been trained by Counterpart Consortium as a trainer to help develop the skills of the community groups.

A number of social events have been held, aiming to maintain, or develop, peaceful social relations between rural communities that share scarce resources. Examples of such events include a volleyball tournament, May Day celebrations, and a children's day that brought young people together for the first time from a group of villages now separated by the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. A series of summer camps to build on these connections, and develop the skills of young people in the community groups is planned for the next quarter.

In terms of infrastructure projects, each of the eighteen communities we currently work in has plans driven by the priorities stated by the local community groups. These include a school shared by a village in Tajikistan with its neighbouring village in Kyrgyzstan, a drinking water pipeline that will provide clean water for to a pair of villages that straddle the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, and a gas pipeline and health clinic for two Kyrgyz villages both isolated within the Uzbek Republic.

This quarter has seen close coordination with other international organisations such as the International Secretariat for Water, Abt Associates, Counterpart Consortium, Save the Children (UK), Soros Foundation, and the American Bar Association. It has also been the formative period for developing a close connection with the new CAIP programmes, sponsored also by USAID, with very similar aims and methodology to PCI. A strong partnership between these two projects will provide opportunities for experience sharing, efficient training and information transfer, and will take the valuable impact of such community driven conflict mitigation development work to hundreds of more rural and urban communities across Central Asia.

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PCI: the first 18 communities



2 : The PCI Process

The partnership of local and international NGOs that makes up the Peaceful Communities Initiative will work in 30-40 communities over the next 3 years. The primary criteria for sites are that they have a multi-ethnic population, face resource scarcity or poor resource management, and exhibit a potential for, or history of, conflict. By sharing community-driven social development and infrastructure projects, PCI aims to bring those communities together in a lasting way and therefore to reduce the potential for trans-boundary or inter-ethnic conflict in the future.

The basic process is that after selecting a site through participative needs assessments, the PCI field teams will take a comprehensive approach to community development by helping to establish a Community Initiative Group (CIG), comprised of individuals representing all sectors in each community. Each CIG then develops a list of the most urgent problems faced by that community and an action plan to address those problems. The sites selections were made last quarter, and in this quarter CIGs were formed in each community and project priorities have been chosen.

Our field teams aim to help communities come to the best conclusion themselves, while not imposing their own visions into the process. This will not only result in projects more tied to the real needs of the communities, but also increase the shared sense of responsibility for problem solving amongst neighbouring villages, thereby contributing to the peaceful development of the Ferghana Valley.

The first 18 PCI Communities

<i><u>Village</u></i>	<i><u>Country</u></i>	<i><u>Team</u></i>	<i><u>Population</u></i>
Ovchi	Tajikistan	Team 1	3900
International	Kyrgyzstan	Team 1	3000
Pahtabuston	Uzbekistan	Team 2	1900
Vorukh	Uzbekistan	Team 2	2400
Ravat	Tajikistan	Team 2	4500
Boz Aydr	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	1500
Kar Tokoi	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	900
Sharqabad	Uzbekistan	Team 3	2200
Sogment	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	1600
Sharbak	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	400
Hushjar	Uzbekistan	Team 3	5500
Mamanazarov	Kyrgyzstan	Team 4	10300
Rohat	Uzbekistan	Team 4	2500
Naiman	Uzbekistan	Team 4	2500
Jeke Miste	Kyrgyzstan	Team 4	2300
Karayontog	Uzbekistan	Team 5	1100
Kyrgyz-Kyshtak	Kyrgyzstan	Team 5	2000
Bobarlik	Uzbekistan	Team 5	7000
		Total Beneficiaries	53,500

3 : Activities This Quarter

a : Training and decision-making

As much as possible, PCI has tried to combine skills training with the participatory team decision-making. The field teams are spread across a very large area, so time spent together is particularly valuable, and the third meeting of the whole team took place in April near Kairakum in Tajikistan. Such meetings are led by facilitators from within the team, and aim at consensus on key issues, which is particularly important given the distance between us and the challenges of communication once we have all returned to our different offices.

During the April meeting, the team developed a common structure for community mobilization in the eighteen villages where PCI is currently working. We also developed the financial and control structures necessary for the projects that the Community Initiative Groups are prioritizing and developing.

After the decision-making meetings, the whole team went through training in facilitation. One member of each team also went through training in a form of participatory strategic planning. Both sessions were led by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, PCI's partner NGO in Tajikistan.

A month later, one member of each team also joined the Kokand Civil Society Development Centre, to go through Counterpart Consortium's training in how to help community groups develop action plans to approach some of the problems facing their areas. These ideas are currently being taken to the Community Initiative Groups in each village where PCI currently works.



PCI Field Officers during a facilitated discussion

b : Social Events

The goal of the Peaceful Communities Initiative is not merely to build physical infrastructure projects. Of even greater importance are the relationships between individuals and rural communities that are divided by ethnic or national borders. Social events are valuable for a variety of reasons. On a practical level, they are low cost, and give the community groups useful experience in working together and handling budgets. More significantly, these events can make a real contribution to rebuilding or maintaining the friendly connections between people that mitigate the conflict brought by resource scarcity in the Ferghana Valley.

Examples of social events this quarter include sports and cultural competitions such as volleyball and singing competitions. Other events have been tied to national celebrations, such as May Day and Children's Day. One such celebration was held by PCI Team 5 near Ferghana City, on the road that links Kyrgyz-Kyshtak in Kyrgyzstan with its neighbouring village, Borbalik, in Uzbekistan. The host village welcomed a bus-load of children and teachers from each of their neighbours, and each community performed songs and dances before starting a kite-flying competition and drawing chalk images on the ground. The children then ate together at a local teahouse. It was the first time that children from these villages separated by the border had met together.



Children from Borbalik sing for their neighbours

Several youth camps and summer excursions have also been organized. Eighty children from the six villages on the Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan sides of the Sokh enclave, where PCI Team 3 works, met together at a former Pioneer camp in the hills near their villages. They played sports and games together, put on cultural shows and went on excursions, aiming to build friendships that will last through the years and maintain peaceful connections between these villages despite cultural, political and linguistic differences.

c : Infrastructure Projects

The value of PCI's technical infrastructure projects is twofold. Firstly, and most obviously, the projects will directly improve the quality of life for the people in these poor, rural communities. What infrastructure there was before independence has often not been properly maintained due to resource constraints. This means that drainage canals are often blocked, water pumps are often broken, and educational or health buildings are in serious disrepair. Also many of these villages were never linked in to systems such as gas supply, and without external assistance see no likelihood of this happening in the near future.

However, the intention is to leave behind not only the physical project itself, but also the valuable experience of solving these problems in the post-Soviet environment. Some of the best gains are the skills obtained in participatory decision-making, project preparation and management needed to allow the communities to face other issues themselves in the future. It is therefore the process, not merely the physical project, that is the contribution to the community.



This process is driven by Community Initiative Groups of ten to fifteen people, young and old, men and women, professionals and unskilled. The people in these groups work voluntarily as representatives of their community and use the results of PCI's participatory assessments to decide which project to develop. They then take responsibility for managing the project, or developing another committee to do so.

A Community Initiative Group from Pahtabuston in training

Projects underway:

Team 1 is preparing to finalise the construction of a school to be shared by the villages of Internationale and Kulundu in Kyrgyzstan with their neighbouring village of Ovchi in Tajikistan.

Team 2 has started a project shared with the local authorities to extend a gas pipeline to the Kyrgyz village of Pahtabuston in Uzbekistan, and a drinking water supply in the villages of Ravod and Vorukh which straddle the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border west of Kokand city.

Team 3 is working on a large pumping project that will bring drinking water to a cluster of Kyrgyz and Tajik communities on either side of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border in Sokh, as well as a school repair project to restore floors in Boz Aydr. The CIG in Boz Aydr has also won a grant from Counterpart Consortium to build a drinking water system to serve the community. PCI will assist in establishing a water committee to promote the sustainability of the system.

Team 4 is constructing a drinking water pipeline, with the support of the International Secretariat for Water and Soros Foundation, that will be shared by the villages of Jeke-Miste in Kyrgyzstan and their neighbours, Naiman in Uzbekistan. In addition, a school repair project in Naiman is underway to put on a new roof and repair the sports hall.

Team 5 has put together a project for a new health clinic in the village of Korayantog, a Kyrgyz population inside Uzbekistan, isolated by the international border.



d : Coordination

PCI works closely with many other projects, particularly those also funded by USAID. Current relationships include those with the American Bar Association, Counterpart Consortium, Soros Foundation, Abt Associates, PA Consulting, and the International Secretariat for Water. Within the Mercy Corps network, PCI is also working closely in Kyrgyzstan with the Global Food for Education effort, in a series of community driven school repair projects sponsored by the US Department for Agriculture.

Most importantly, during this quarter PCI developed a close connection with the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP), a much larger USAID funded project shared by several agencies including Mercy Corps. CAIP has very similar goals and is also working in the Ferghana Valley. PCI and CAIP will share resources and experience between all agencies, but particularly within Mercy Corps, and of course most closely in the Ferghana Valley. There will be shared training events and a common management structure, and many communities where PCI works in Uzbekistan will also be able to receive support through CAIP.

4 : Lessons Learned

The pressures on agricultural workers during the early summer months have meant that PCI teams have had to be flexible with the times that they work. The winter months brought the challenge of working and trying to facilitate open and imaginative discussions in cold rooms. The summer months bring a very heavy workload for young and old, plus high midday temperatures. Often meetings can only be conducted in the early morning or late evening.

Working with young people is a priority for the conflict prevention focus of the project. However, it has become clear that more conservative communities are reticent to include girls in social events far from home, and that both field teams and initiative groups have



felt the need to train young people before they become full members of the community. The forthcoming PCI-wide youth camp will involve active young people and those from the community initiative groups to build friendships, share ideas and learn about working in participative groups.

John and Bahodyr with children and their PRA-style maps

The central method that PCI has used in its community mobilization work has been facilitation. We have based much of this on the experience and highly developed techniques of our partner NGO in Tajikistan, ICA:EHIO. However, it is clear that this methodology has been less successful in rural environments than it has been in a controlled, formal meeting of professional development workers. To adapt the methodology to the less controlled arena of the rural community is a high priority.

Connected to this is the challenge to PCI's field officers not to let their opinions dominate. It is difficult to not emerge as a community leader when that is both your own personal experience of project work, and the explicit assumption of the local communities. The ethic of facilitation is a vital foundation, but a continuing challenge.

We have found that despite the need for training in a wide variety of areas, from environmental impact to child rights, it is a major stress on capital resources and time in the communities to bring together the full PCI team. There is a real value in bringing together just one representative of each team for training, and the informal experience exchange, which is so important when our five field teams are spread over such a wide area.

5 : Next steps

This quarter will see additional trainings, many linked in with Mercy Corps' CAIP events, and certainly for some of the teams, with the International Secretariat for Water for the support of Drinking Water Committees. From our partners in Kyrgyzstan, the Foundation for Tolerance International, there will be trainings on understanding conflict, as well as on the establishment of drinking water committees.

There will be coordination with Abt Associates' ZdravPlus sports program, as the co-financing of a soccer league for children is being planned with four PCI communities.

PCI plans on distributing 3,700 pairs of Nike Basketball shoes. The shoe distribution program will build on the USAID/PCI Ferghana Valley Friendship Basketball League, which was held between November and May. Distribution will begin in early August at a tournament which has been renamed the USAID-Nike Annual Ferghana Valley Basketball Tournament.

The series of summer camps and excursions will continue. The young people from all CIGs will meet together to learn new skills and discuss issues of importance in their communities.

Infrastructure projects across the Valley will be constructed with the support of the local communities, and in almost every case, with support from local governments. Hopefully, many of these will be visited by local and international delegations to see the concrete results of the CIGs' work.

Community Initiative Groups will also start to discuss their next social and infrastructure projects, and how they will work with PCI for the rest of the project. The five field teams will also begin to assess other areas where this work is a priority. These areas will include places rejected in the first round of selections because the level of conflict was considered too high. With the experience we have now, it is hoped that we can make a real contribution to communities experiencing serious ethnic or trans-boundary conflict.

6 : Contact Information

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